

chance to find common purpose and common ground, all aiming at achieving the peace we all desire.

I am floored by the progress that's being made in parts of the world that used to be dark, places where people had no hope, and today, they see light.

Today in my speech at the U.N., I pointed out the fact that 10 million citizens in Afghanistan have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election, 41 percent of whom are women. This is a society that 3 years ago was a place where young girls weren't allowed to go to school, and their mothers were whipped in the public squares because they didn't toe the dark line of a group of people whose vision was limited by hatred. And today, 3 years later, 10 million citizens have said, "I love freedom. I want to be free." And they're going to the polls.

And the world is going to be more peaceful for it. We believe that liberty and freedom go hand in hand. We believe every human heart desires to be free, and I believe every free nation has a responsibility to free every human heart, as best we can.

So that's how I view the 59th session of the U.N. General Assembly. It's an honor to be here. It's great to see *mis amigos*, my friends. I want to thank you all for your hard work, and may God bless you and your countries. Thank you for coming. Good night, everybody. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria. In his remarks, he referred to Sally Danforth, wife of former Senator John C. Danforth, U.S. Representative to the United Nations; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York and his wife, Elizabeth "Libby"; Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; Veronica Kelly, wife of New York City Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly; and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations and his wife, Nane.

Remarks in a Discussion on Education in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

September 22, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate so many people coming out to say hello. Thanks.

So when I asked Laura to marry me, she said, "Fine. Just so long as I don't have to give any speeches." [Laughter] Fortunately she didn't hold me to the promise. She's a woman of great compassion and decency. She understands education well. I'm proud to call her wife. I know you're proud to call her First Lady.

I want to talk about my plans to make America and the world safer and to make this country a more hopeful place. Today we're going to emphasize education. We've got some experts up here on education. And in a little bit we're going to hear from them to help make the points that Laura and I are making around the country, that we can close an achievement gap, that every child can learn, we expect every school to teach. And we're making progress when it comes to our public schools.

I also want to thank you for what you're going to do. See, what you're going to do is put up the signs and register the voters, bring people out to vote. Today you're going to leave here, hopefully, realizing that I have a reason to run again, that I've got a vision, that Laura and I are honored to serve our country. But I'm traveling the country giving people a reason why: Four more years will make the world a safer place, America a safer place, and the country a more hopeful place.

I am not only out there campaigning with Laura, but I'm really pleased with the good work Vice President Cheney has done and is doing as well.

I also want to thank you for training our Director of Homeland Security so well. [Laughter] Tom Ridge is doing a great job. He's a close friend. I'm really proud of the work he's doing on behalf of our country to better protect America from these evildoers that would like to continue to strike us. Tom is doing a wonderful job.

I'm proud to be working with your U.S. Senators: Senator Specter—put him back in for 6 more years, by the way. He's a good man. Senator Santorum, he's a good fellow too.

I appreciate Melissa Brown, who's running for the United States House. Thank you for coming.

Tom Corbett, the candidate for attorney general, is with us. Jean Craig Pepper is

with us. Thanks for coming, Jean. I'm proud you're here. Listen, I understand—understand Karen Stout, the president of the community college system—thank you for coming.

Let me say something about community colleges.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. Community colleges are vital for the future of this country. You're going to hear me talk a little bit about the changing times in which we live and that institutions must change with the changing times. Our worker training programs must change with the changing times, and community colleges are a fantastic place, a wonderful opportunity for workers to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. And I appreciate you being here.

Part of our vision for a more hopeful America expands community college—access to community colleges all across our country. Think about the community colleges: They're accessible; they're affordable; and they're able to adjust to the times. And we need to use community colleges more effectively to make sure, as the economy changes, as new jobs are created, the workers can gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming. You've got a great system, I understand.

Also met Shannon Hickey. Where are you, Shannon? Somewhere. Anyway, she's here, believe me. She came to the airport. Oh, there's Shannon. Thanks for being here. Hiding behind the pillar—or hiding in front of the pillar. Shannon meets me at the airport today. Shannon is a soldier in the army of compassion. She is a soul who started what's called Mychal's Message in 2002. She is a social entrepreneur. She heard a call and acted upon it. This program serves an outreach to the homeless in Philadelphia and other cities in the State of Pennsylvania. This young soul, inspired by the example of Father Mychal Judge, who is the chaplain of the New York City Fire Department who died on September the 11th, 2001, heard a call, a universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, and started this program to help people who need help.

Listen, the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America. The strength of America is found in people like Shannon. I'm honored you're here.

I particularly want the young who are here to look at Shannon as an example of what you can do to help change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. Proud you're here, Shannon. Thank you for the example you set.

Later on today I'm going to travel your State and inspect the damage of the floods. I just want the people of this important State to understand that our Government is ready to help, that we'll provide whatever aid is necessary, whatever aid we're capable of providing, to the victims of these floods. Our prayers go to those families who've had their lives turned upside down, and God bless you all.

A hopeful society is one in which the economy grows. See, you can't have a hopeful society if people can't find work. And our economy is growing, and it is amazing it is growing because we've overcome a lot of obstacles. When you're out gathering up the vote, remind people what we've been through in a brief period of time. We've been through a recession. When Vice President Cheney and I got sworn in, this country was heading into a recession. As a matter of fact, the stock market had been correcting about 5 months before the inauguration. In other words, the economy was beginning to change.

And then as we began to get on our feet again, some corporate scandals affected the conscience of our country. One of the things that our society rests upon is confidence, and people—and the numbers on balance sheets, and some of our citizens weren't responsible citizens. They betrayed the trust. We got together and passed tough laws that make it clear we're not going to tolerate that kind of dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. But the corporate scandals affected us. Those scandals did affect us.

Then, of course, the enemy attacked us on September the 11th, 2001. Some estimate it costs us a million jobs in the 3 months after the attack. These are major obstacles for any economy to overcome, yet we're overcoming them.

The economy is growing. The unemployment rate in this State is 5.6 percent. That's down. People are working. I understand there are some pockets that still are lagging behind the national numbers, and we're going to keep working to make sure people can find work. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great workers. We've overcome these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. The small-business sector of our economy is thriving. We've overcome these obstacles because the farmers are—know what they're doing, and they're good at growing crops. We've overcome these obstacles because of tax cuts.

And so the question is, how do we take this recovery and convert it into lasting prosperity? Here's how.

First, America must be the best place in the world to do business. If you want to find jobs here in America, if you want people being able to realize their dreams by working, America must be the best place in the entire world for people to do business. That means less regulations on our businesses. That means we've got to do something about these lawsuits that are making it awfully hard for employers to expand.

That means Congress needs to pass my energy plan. You want jobs here at home? If you want there to be jobs in Pennsylvania and in America, if you want our manufacturing companies to be able to thrive, we need reliable sources of energy. We need to modernize our electricity grid. We need to encourage conservation. We need to use renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. We need to use technology to make sure we can burn our coal as cleanly as possible. We need to use technology to explore for natural gas in our hemisphere. What I'm telling you is, in order to make sure these kids can find work and to make sure this job base continues to expand, we must be less reliant on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure jobs are here in America, we must reject economic isolationism and open up markets to U.S. products. See, we are good at a lot of things here in America, and we ought to have a level

playing field so that we can sell that which we're good at producing around the world. We open up our markets from goods from other countries, and it's good for U.S. consumers. I mean, if you've got more product to choose from, you're likely to find that which you want at a better quality and better price. So what I say to countries like China is, "You treat us the way we treat you." We're going to open up the markets around the world. We'll create a level playing field. Americans can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, if the rules are fair.

You want this economy to continue to grow, we've got to keep taxes low. And we have a difference of opinion in this campaign about taxes. My opponent thus far has proposed \$2.2 trillion in new spending, and we've still got a month to go—[laughter]—\$2.2 trillion. That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] So they say, "How are you going to pay for it?" They said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "That's easy. Tax the rich." Now, you've heard that before, haven't you?

First of all, do you realize most small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax level? Think about that: 90 percent of small businesses are organized as Subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships. Therefore, if you talk about raising the top two brackets of the individual income tax, you're talking about taxing them. That makes no sense. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And when my opponent says he's going to tax the rich by raising the top two brackets, it means he's going to tax about a million small businesses that are creating new jobs. It makes no sense to tax the job creators when this economy is beginning to recover.

Secondly, he says he's going to tax the rich. Rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason—[laughter]—to stick you with the bill. We're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November.

The work place has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. You know, it used to be, a person had one job, one career, one pension plan, one health care plan, and that person was generally a male. Today, workers—Americans change jobs and careers, and

a lot of women are working both in the home and outside the home. And yet——

Audience member. “W” stands for “Women.”

The President. And so it—and yet, when you think about it, the fundamental systems of Government were designed for yesterday. The labor laws were designed for yesterday. The health care plans were designed for yesterday. The pension plans were designed for yesterday. The Tax Code was designed for yesterday. I’m running again because I want to change these fundamental systems to help people realize their dreams. See, the role of Government is to provide opportunity for people to realize their dreams, not to dictate to people, not to tell people, not to run the lives of the American citizens. And that’s the fundamental difference of this campaign.

A couple of points I want to make and explain to you what I’m talking about. Take Social Security: If you’re a senior citizen on Social Security, you have nothing to worry about, about the Trust Fund providing the money the Government said it’s going to pay you. That’s just the way it is. Now, I understand how politics works, and I understand there’s attempts in the political campaigns to scare seniors by saying if so-and-so gets elected, they’re going to take away your check. But the reality is the Social Security Trust is solvent for those who are on Social Security today. You’re going to get your check, in other words. Baby boomers, like me—I think we’re in pretty good shape when it comes to the Social Security Trust.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about these kids right back here, in terms of whether or not there’s going to be a Social Security trust available to meet what the Government said it’s going to do. I believe in order to strengthen Social Security, younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set up personal savings accounts to get a better rate of return than the current Social Security Trust does, a personal savings account they call their own, a personal savings account they can pass on to another generation, a personal savings account that the Government cannot take away. We’ve got to think differently about

our pension plans. They were designed for the past. Times have changed.

Labor laws, for example—it is impossible for some business because of labor laws to give a mom flex-time or comp-time at her place of work, because the laws were designed for yesterday. I believe the labor laws ought to be designed for tomorrow and allow companies to let workers take time off so that they can juggle the needs of work and family. Listen, our labor laws ought to be family-friendly. Our labor laws ought to recognize that the work force has changed dramatically.

A couple of things about health care right quick. I’m a big backer, believer in what’s called health savings accounts. These are accounts where people can save tax-free, employer and employee can contribute tax-free—that helps cover catastrophic costs for the worker. But these health savings accounts are accounts that somebody calls their own. They own them, and they can take them from job to job, no matter what career they may be in.

These accounts make sense. It helps hold down the cost of medicine, at the same time as it ensures that the health care decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Government planners and bureaucrats. I believe that good health policy empowers people to make decisions, as opposed to empowering the Federal Government to make decisions on behalf of people. And that’s the fundamental difference in this campaign on health care.

Now, look, I believe Government should help those who cannot help themselves. That’s why I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get good primary care and good preventative care. And I’m going to make sure in the second term that every poor county in America has one.

I also believe we ought to continue to expand the children’s health care program, to make sure that all who are eligible are covered by this health care initiative.

But I am unalterably opposed to plans which move people from private insurance to Government insurance. I’m unalterably opposed to plans which mean the Federal Government will intrude into your decision-making process.

The cost of health care is affected by frivolous lawsuits. I strongly support medical liability reform. We must make sure good doctors stay in practice. This is an issue in this campaign. See, you can't have it both ways. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to make a choice. Listen, I understand what's happening to ob-gyns here in the State of Pennsylvania, because I've met them. I've met with those whose premiums are getting so high they cannot practice, and therefore, it hurts pregnant women. I understand what's taking place in your State. But you understand it better than I do. And therefore, I'm going to continue to talk about medical liability reform until the Senate and the House overcomes the obstacles of the trial lawyers and gets the job done.

All right, we're here to talk about education. A hopeful world is one in which every child learns to read, write, and add and subtract. I went to Washington to fix problems and to challenge the status quo, if the status quo was—meant mediocrity. And I was worried about a public school system that sometimes gave up on kids. I went to Washington to challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. See, if you lower the bar, you're going to get lousy results. If you believe certain children cannot read and write and add and subtract, those children won't learn to read and write and add and subtract. We had a policy, if we're frank about it, where schools just shuffled kids through. Not every school, of course, but many children were being just shuffled through the system, and we hoped that we got it right in the end. And that's not fair. It's not fair to the child. It's not fair to the parents, and it's, frankly, not fair to the teachers and principals, either.

And so, in return for increasing Federal spending, I said to Congress, "Why don't we insist that States measure early? Why don't we insist that there be strong accountability measures so we can determine whether curriculum are working, so we can correct a child's learning problems early before that child just moves through grade after grade? Why don't we say we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations by raising the bar, allowing local folks to make the right decisions for their schools, and using an ac-

countability system to help achieve excellence?" And the Congress joined me in passing that piece of legislation, and it's working.

It's working because there's an achievement gap in America that's closing. And I can say it's working because we measure. We used to say, "I think it's working." Now we say, "It's working." More and more African American fourth graders are achieving what—that which we wanted, is being able to read at grade level. Those are facts. More and more Latino kids are learning to read and write, and that's a fact. And that's an important part of making sure this country has got a hopeful future.

My opponent and I—he supported No Child Left Behind Act. Then, of course, he gets in a tough campaign—[laughter]—and starts talking about weakening the accountability standards. That makes no sense to weaken something that's working. We want to know—we want to know.

And today we're going to talk about some educators—talk with some educators that understand the power of using accountability as a way to achieve excellence for every child, excellence for every child.

Let me talk about one other thing before we talk to our guests, and that is, I'm going to ask Congress to set up a teacher incentive fund. It's a \$500 million fund to allow States and school districts to access the money to pay teachers for a job well done. And if the accountability system shows progress, I think there ought to be a reward for that progress. The Federal Government is not going to decide who gets the money. I believe in local control of schools. Districts and States ought to making those decisions about how to use performance grant money.

We're also expanding the, what we call the Adjunct Teacher Corps. It's to pay professionals, particularly in math and science, to come in the classrooms, because I know we need to be emphasizing math and science if we want our high school kids to have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I believe very strongly that we ought to provide incentives for teachers to teach in a math, science, or special ed in low-income schools. It's a need that we have around the country. And therefore, I believe we ought

to increase student loan forgiveness from \$5,000 to \$17,500 to help teachers.

Finally, I'm a big believer in teacher training programs. The Reading First program that we put in place provides a lot of money to teach teachers how to teach and use curriculum that works. See, if you measure, you can determine whether or not the curriculum you're using is working. And when you find a curriculum that does work, then we ought to make sure we provide enough teacher training money so these good souls have got the skills necessary to achieve excellence in the classroom.

And so I'm joined today by Gene Hickok. He's a fellow Pennsylvania citizen. He is a former Pennsylvania secretary of education, a person I know well. I've worked with him a long time on achieving excellence in public schools.

Gene, it's good to see you. Why don't you tell us what it's like to be involved with proposing, passing, and implementing an historic piece of legislation.

[*Gene Hickok made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, I agree. Listen, here's the thing, that when Gene talks about a school full of children who some may think can't possibly learn, and they are learning, it basically says: One, there's a dedicated principal and great teachers; it also says that they're using the system to be able to solve problems today, as opposed to kind of ignoring the problems. And by that, it—for example, if a child falls behind in reading, there's extra Federal money, particularly for Title I students, to help that child with tutoring and after-school help. It provides money to make sure that child has an opportunity to get up to speed.

So the accountability system doesn't punish. Frankly, it exposes problems. It's a diagnostic tool. I've always said to people, "You can't solve a problem until you diagnose it." And we're diagnosing problems, and we're providing extra money to solve the problem.

And what Gene is saying is, people are using this system to be able to achieve excellence in the classrooms, and it's happening. How do you know? Because we're measuring, is how we know. We're able to measure progress. We're able to watch. It's called

annual yearly progress. That's kind of the key word. Progress toward what? Progress toward excellence. Thank you, Gene, for being here.

Lou Ramos is with us. So why are you here, Lou? [*Laughter*] You're a member of the——

Luis A. Ramos. I'm a member of the State board of education, Mr. President.

The President. That's why you're here.

Mr. Ramos. That's why I'm here. [*Laughter*]

The President. Plus, you're a good man. That's why you're here.

Mr. Ramos. I do want to thank you for the opportunity to let you know that Pennsylvanians do not fear the "A" word, accountability. We're here for that, and we recognize that. We're up to the challenge.

But what's happening in Pennsylvania is that, in fact, we're making decisions based on data. We are, in a difficult times as far as funding education, and I do know that—I've studied the data, and you've increased funding for education by 37 percent. It could be a little more. We look for that. That has helped.

The President. You mean to Pennsylvania.

Mr. Ramos. In Pennsylvania.

The President. It's 49 percent nationwide.

Mr. Ramos. Forty-nine percent nationwide.

The President. This looks like a funding gap—we've got to do something about it. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Ramos made further remarks.*]

Mr. Ramos. So there's a lot I can share, and I want to do that, because I had my own story to share with you.

The President. Let's hear it.

Mr. Ramos. Well, actually, I'm always asked, "Why are you so passionate about education, considering that you worked for a large energy company, and you take time to do that?" And the answer is, as a young child, I came to the mainland from Puerto Rico, didn't speak a stitch of English. English was not my first language. It is today.

The President. Some people say it's not my first language, either. [*Laughter*]

[Mr. Ramos made further remarks.]

The President. What a great story. Let me tell you something about our country. Think about that, there's old Lou sitting next to the President of the United States, you know, talking about his dreams and aspirations.

Mr. Ramos. Only in America.

The President. It is only in America. And listen, and you know what—we want this story to be repeated neighborhood after neighborhood, school after school, by making sure no child is left behind. See, if you give the people the tools necessary, they can realize great dreams here in America. And the most important tool of all is to make sure every child has an education.

One of the things I learned as Governor of Texas and know as President of the United States, that every school—successful schools have got strong leaders, and that strong leader is the principal. And today we've got Sharen Finzimer with us today. She is the principal of F.S. Edmonds School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Thanks for coming. What kind of school have you got there?

[Sharen Finzimer made brief remarks.]

The President. AYP means annual yearly progress. In other words, it is Government-speak for we're measuring to determine whether or not the children are heading toward excellence. Why—besides your brilliance, why?

[Ms. Finzimer made further remarks.]

The President. Let me stop you right there. Notice she said "research-based." In other words, what that means is, people have actually looked at what works and have incorporated what works into the textbooks. That's what we want. We want curriculum that actually achieves our objectives. Remember the old reading debates—there was—sometimes people had this notion about what might work, and we never knew whether it was or not until we started to measure. That's how you can say "research-based" textbooks.

Keep going.

[Ms. Finzimer made further remarks.]

The President. Interventions means, when they find the child beginning to slip

behind what is expected, there's extra money to help. That's what this program is all about. When we say no child left behind, that's exactly what we mean, no child left behind. In other words, she's able to use technologies and to follow the progress of a child on a regular basis, which is a change from the past. The past used to be, they'd kind of just move them through. Now they're analyzing each child's progress and working to correct, if the child has a problem, working to correct his or her problem. I think that's what you're saying. And that's what you're doing, and it's working. It's making a difference.

Tell me about your Saturday school.

[Ms. Finzimer made further remarks.]

The President. You can understand why her school is doing well, right? She has a passion. And when she talks about Title I students, that's where our Federal Government has increased funding quite substantially, since I've been the President of the United States, nearly 50-percent increase in the funds for Title I, all aimed at making sure no child is left behind. You can't be a great principal unless you've got great teachers. We don't have one of your teachers here, but I know they're great teachers.

But we do have Megan Schmidt with us, a teacher. What subject?

Megan Schmidt. Mr. President, I teach English and creative writing at North Penn High School.

The President. Thanks for teaching. Tell us what you've learned.

[Ms. Schmidt made further remarks.]

The President. Let me pick up on one thing that Megan said. It makes the parents aware. It's a amazing—when Laura and I were honored to serve our State, we were traveling around, and people would say, "Gosh, my school is doing great. At least I think my school is doing great." And all of a sudden, when we started to put out the accountability measures, people would say, "Well, maybe it's not doing quite as great," when the test scores didn't measure up to the school in the community next door or another school in the same community. Accountability, allowing people to see results, really does encourage parental involvement.

Sometimes educators don't particularly care the way the parent has been involved, like, "How come you didn't tell us earlier? What are you doing about it?" But nevertheless, it does encourage parents to get involved, doesn't it?

Ms. Schmidt. Absolutely.

The President. Keep going.

Ms. Schmidt. Thank you.

[*Ms. Schmidt made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me say something. I hope people, particularly young, consider becoming teachers. It is such a noble profession, and it's such an important profession. I want to thank you for being here, Megan.

The temptation is to weaken No Child Left Behind. There's great temptation in Washington to say, "Gosh, well, let's kind of ease up. Maybe we shouldn't measure. Maybe we ought to use different criterion to determine whether or not people are meeting AYP—annual yearly progress." The guy I'm running against for President actual suggested maybe school attendance ought to be considered as to whether or not we're making annual yearly progress. That doesn't make any sense. What we want to do is to continue to focus on each child's ability to learn and correct problems now so we don't just shuffle them through the system. We're making great progress. We're closing the achievement gap. We're going to continue to fund education. We'll continue to help teachers train. We'll continue to insist upon strong accountability, and we're not turning back.

I want to talk a little bit about how to make America and the world safer. We have a solemn duty to protect the American people. I'd like to share with you a couple of the lessons I've learned from September the 11th, 2001. First of all, we face an enemy that is coldblooded. They have no conscience whatsoever. And therefore—and they're smart, and they're capable, and they're patient, and they're tough. And therefore, our Government must never yield, must never try to negotiate with them, must never hope that—for the best, that they change their ways. We must stay on the offensive and bring them to justice before they hurt us again here at home.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. Please. Thank you all. Thank you all.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Oh no, no, no, not yet. Not yet. Got a little more work to do here. [*Laughter*] Thank you, though.

Secondly, when the President speaks, he must mean what he says. He's got to be clear and understandable. And when you say something, you've got to follow through. I said I recognize this is a different kind of struggle than we've ever been used to. And it's a struggle that we will win, so long as we're resolute and determined.

I said that, if you provide safe haven for a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists. I meant that, because I understood that in order to find the kind of shadowy group of people, we had to rout them out of their safe havens. Remember, Al Qaida was training in Afghanistan. They had training bases. They literally trained thousands of people. They—the Al Qaida strategy in Afghanistan is clear. They were the parasite on a lenient host, and maybe at some point in time, had they been there long enough, they would have become the host. But their supporters were the Taliban, and these people were some kind of backwards. Here we are talking about—here we are—listen to this. Listen to this for a second. Here we are talking about education, and yet, they believed young girls shouldn't be educated. Think about growing up in a society like that, a society without hope, a society that said, "You're condemned for failure because you're a female." That's the way the Taliban was. It's hard for any American to envision somebody whose vision is that dim and dark.

I made it clear to the Taliban that they had to stop harboring Al Qaida. They didn't believe us. And so a great United States military went in and removed the Taliban from power. [*Applause*] Hold on a second. We're safer as a result of the actions that the U.S. military took, and the people of Afghanistan are better off.

Yesterday I met with President Karzai. He's running for election. Could you ever imagine somebody from the Taliban saying,

"I'm running for election"? [Laughter] This guy is out running for election. Think about what's happened in Afghanistan in a brief period of time. Young girls are now going to school, and we're helping to rebuild schools. Their moms are no longer subjected to being whipped in the public square because they don't happen to agree with the ideology of hatred that was being professed by the Taliban. Ten million Afghan citizens have registered to vote, 41 percent of whom are women. An election is going to take place in October. It's an unbelievable statistic.

People say, "Well, there are certain people who really don't want to be free in the world." I strongly disagree with that concept. I believe everybody wants to be free, and the Afghan people are showing that they want to be free. There's a lot of intimidation there. A lot of people—remember, they pulled the poor women off the bus—"they" being the Taliban—and killed them because they had, I think, voter registration cards. The Afghan people are not going to be stopped when it comes to freedom. They will defy these terrorists because freedom exists in their heart and soul. It's something they're willing to work for, and we have an obligation to help them. A free Afghanistan is in our Nation's interest. We're more secure because of the decision that we took in Afghanistan.

Let me talk about Iraq. One of the lessons that changed—one of the lessons we learned or must have learned or must never forget about September the 11th, is that we've got to take threats seriously, before they come to hurt us. When I was your age, if we saw a threat overseas, we could deal with it if we felt like it or not, because we never really dreamt that an attack would occur on America again. And that's the fundamental shift of our life here in America. September the 11th makes us realize that an enemy can strike us. And if we see threats overseas, we must take them seriously, before they hurt us.

Our hope, of course, is diplomacy works. That's why we're working with other nations to send a message to Iran and North Korea. There's more than one voice in saying to the North Koreans, "Disarm, and join the world as a peaceful nation." China is involved. Japan is involved. South Korea is involved.

Russia is involved, and the United States of America. We're all saying the same thing. We want there to be a nuclear-weapons-free Korean Peninsula.

We always must try to deal with threats diplomatically. Now, in Iraq, we saw a threat. The threat was, was that Saddam Hussein was a sworn enemy of America. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He had terrorist connections, Abu Abbas, Abu Nidal, Zarqawi. He paid the families of suicide bombers. And the greatest threat facing us was whether or not he would be able to share his capability of producing weapons, or weapons that we thought were there, with an enemy that would like to inflict more harm. It's why I went to the United Nations, to try to solve this problem diplomatically.

I said, "Listen, we've got a problem. We see a threat." The Congress spoke, by the way. They looked at the same intelligence I looked at and remembered the same history I did and voted overwhelmingly to authorize the use of force. My opponent made that same decision. He voted to authorize the use of force. He remembered—he said Saddam Hussein was a threat then. [Laughter]

The United Nations passed a resolution 15 to nothing that said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." As I said yesterday at the United Nations, when you say something, you better mean it. In order to keep the world more peaceful, when an international body says "face serious consequences," they better mean what they say. Saddam Hussein had no intention of disclosing or disarming, because he didn't believe there would be serious consequences. He had ignored the demands of the world in 2003 just like he had done for the last decade. They wanted to send inspectors into his country. He systematically deceived them.

So I've got a choice. The choice is: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th; do I hope for the best when it comes to Saddam Hussein; or do I take action to defend the country? If given that choice, I'll defend America every time. The world is safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell, and so is America.

A couple other points I want to make right quick. Anytime we put our troops in harm's

way, they must have the full support of the Federal Government. This is an obligation of our Government to say to the troops and their loved ones, "We'll give you the tools you need to complete your mission."

That's why a year ago I went to the Congress and asked for a supplemental funding of \$87 billion. It was money to support our troops in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We're talking about spare parts, ammunition, fuel, body armor, hazard pay, health benefits. It was really important legislation. It received overwhelming support in the Senate and in the House. Only 12 Senators voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate. *[Laughter]* As a matter of fact, those two, my opponent and his runningmate voted—were two of four people who voted for the authorization of force and against funding the troops in harm's way.

Of course, you've heard the famous statement he made. They said, "Why did you do it?" He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." The President of the United States must speak clearly and mean what he says.

We're doing hard work in Iraq right now. It's hard to help a country go from tyranny to elections to peace when there are a handful of people who are willing to kill in order to stop the process. And that's what you're seeing on the TV screens. These people cannot beat us militarily, and so they use the only tool at their disposal, which is beheadings and death, to try to shake our will. They understand the nature of America. American people value every human life. We believe in the dignity and worth of every human being. We have a conscience. We weep when we think about the families affected by those who have been brutalized by these terrorists. And they are hoping, these terrorists are hoping, to shake the will of the Iraqi people and of the American people. They know what's on our TV screens.

I met yesterday with Prime Minister Allawi. He's the Prime Minister of Iraq. He said as clearly as he could to me that not only are we making progress, but the Iraqi people want to be free. They are not going to allow these thugs to intimidate them as they head toward elections and a free society. Everybody wants to be free, and we must

not allow these thugs and killers to stop the advance of freedom in Iraq.

These are critical times, and I'm glad the Prime Minister is here to reinforce the strategy we have in place. Listen, our military is working with the Iraqi Interim Government. They're flexible. They're changing their tactics on the ground to meet the tactics of the enemy. We're building—rebuilding Iraq. And it's tough, at times, because once you build something, they blow it up. But there is steady progress, in terms of reconstruction. For example, electricity is higher today than it was during—before our arrival to remove Saddam Hussein from power. More and more children are going to school. More and more children are being immunized. Hospitals are opening up. There is progress being made, and they're going to have elections in January.

The way to prevail, the way toward the successful conclusion we all want, the way to secure Iraq and bring our troops home as quickly as possible is not to wilt or waver or send mixed signals to the enemy.

My opponent is sending mixed signals. He has had many different positions on Iraq. Incredibly, this week he said he would prefer the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to the situation in Iraq today.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You cannot lead the war against terror if you wilt or waver when times get tough. You cannot expect the Iraqi people to stand up and do the hard work of democracy if you're pessimistic about their ability to govern themselves. You cannot expect our troops to continue doing the hard work if they hear mixed messages from Washington, DC. Mixed signals are wrong signals. I'll continue to speak clearly. I'll continue to lead. And I'm confident we'll achieve our objectives, and the world will be better off and more secure.

One more point I want to make. Please sit down for a second. *[Laughter]* It's not going to be a long point. *[Laughter]* So I was with my friend Prime Minister Koizumi yesterday in New York City. I said, "You know I've been talking about you on the campaign trail." He said, "Keep talking about me." I said, "Good. I will." *[Laughter]*

And here's why I'm talking about him. He and I are friends, and Laura and the Prime Minister are friends as well. He's been to our ranch. We sat down at the—talking about different issues facing the world. Think about that for a minute, in the context of World War II. Really, 60 years ago, Japan was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. A lot of people lost their life in fighting against the Japanese in World War II. They had attacked our country, of course, the last major attack on our country since September—prior to September the 11th.

And after the end of World War II, Harry Truman, my predecessor, and other Americans believed that Japan could self-govern; it could be a democracy. That's what they believed. And they believed that because they believe every person desires to be free. And they believed that because—and they hoped that because they knew free societies would be peaceful societies. And there were skeptics, of course, just like there are in any society. People said, "Well, gosh, you can't do that. How can you possibly believe that our enemy could become a friend? How could you possibly believe Japan could become a democracy?" But they believed, and they worked hard, and Japan did become a democracy.

And today, as a result of Japan becoming a democracy—today, as a result of liberty being spread to parts of the world where there was hatred—I sit down with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about keeping the peace we all want. And that's going to happen, so long as we're resolute and steadfast in our belief in liberty. It's going to happen in our day. It's going to make the lives of these folks a lot more peaceful, because someday an American President is going to be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about peace in the greater Middle East, talking about how to make this world a peaceful place.

These are historic times. I'm driven by my desire to protect the American people. I'll be steadfast in my resolve to do everything I can to make you secure. But I'm also driven by my deep belief that every soul yearns for liberty. Listen, freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I want to thank you all for coming out. Thank you for your vote. Thank you for your support. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. at the Valley Forge Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Melissa Brown, candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District; Jean Craigie Pepper, candidate for Pennsylvania State treasurer; Karen A. Stout, president, Montgomery County Community College; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks on Recovery Efforts in Millvale, Pennsylvania

September 22, 2004

Listen, thank you all for coming. I have just flown over Allegheny County. I have seen the devastation that took place. The storm and the floods were lethal, and they cause a lot of heartache and damage. I know there are people in this part of our country who are grieving for lost ones, and we send our prayers to all who grieve.

I know there are people here who are concerned as to whether or not they'll ever get their life back together. I hope my visit here with the Senators and Congressmen say as clearly as we can that we care about the devastation that took place, that we understand the Federal Government has an obligation to help, and we will.

Most of all, I'm here to thank the people of this community who have risen up to deal with the hardship. My message not only is to the people of the Millvale but is to Etna and Carnegie as well, communities in this part of the world that were hard hit. You know, the volunteer firefighters here, I was honored to be able to shake hands with some. I looked in the guy's eyes and said, "You got flood eyes"—obviously, he had no sleep. He's doing all he could do to help save lives and help begin to heal the hurt.